

Libby Community Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

March 8, 2001

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- Agency Reports
 - EPA
 - ATSDR
 - Lincoln County
- Community Health Center Proposal Update
- Wilkins Letter Proposal
- Wagner Letter Proposal
- Thom Letter Proposal
- Public Comment

EPA Report

Wendy Thomi announced that copies of the Community Involvement Plan are available at the EPA Information Center. She also made some copies available at this meeting.

Paul Peronard, EPA On-Scene Coordinator, reported on the following topics:

Asbestos Standard

At the last CAG meeting, Mr. Peronard reported that EPA is initiating a study to assess whether the national asbestos standard should be changed to account for fiber size, toxicity, and physical characteristics. Also as reported last meeting, EPA will convene a conference this May 24-25 at Berkeley, California as a part of the standard assessment process. This conference will be highly technical and medically oriented. Mr. Peronard repeated his request that the CAG suggest someone from Libby to attend and observe the conference at EPA expense. The CAG agreed to Rita Windom's proposal that a local internist be invited to attend. She volunteered to identify an internist from Libby who would be willing to do so.

Libby School Investigation

Last year EPA sampled indoor air for asbestos in Libby schools. Mr. Peronard said that Mr. Maki's information about the vermiculite use at the high school and middle school running tracks has prompted EPA to investigate all Libby schools for uses of vermiculite.

Phase 2 of the Residential Sampling

Mr. Peronard described four scenarios in the sampling. The first, which is underway, consists of people going about their normal activities in their homes while wearing air sampling pumps. Fourteen homes will be used in the sampling which will occur over a two week period. The second scenario monitors aggressive cleaning activities with EPA contractors doing the cleaning and wearing air sampling pumps. This scenario will involve temporary relocation of the home residents and should begin about March 15. In the third scenario, EPA personnel or contractors will engage in simulated home remodeling activities that involve insulation such as replacing

wiring or installing an attic fan. The simulated remodeling is scheduled to begin the second week of April. In the last scenario, outside activities such as tilling gardens will be monitored. The outside activities won't begin until the ground conditions are dry, in May or June depending on weather conditions.

NIOSH

As an extension of the Phase 2 sampling, personnel from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) will conduct health hazard evaluations of work on homes that may disturb vermiculite insulation. Such work may be conducted by electricians, cable installers, and remodelers. NIOSH publishes hazard alerts for workers as well as hazard controls to inform workers how they might protect themselves if they encounter vermiculite insulation. Mr. Peronard introduced Dan Hewitt, an Industrial Hygienist with NIOSH. Mr. Hewitt asked that people who are workers in areas that might bring them into contact with vermiculite insulation call NIOSH so that he or other members of his team might interview them for possible participation in the health hazard evaluation. Mr. Hewitt's telephone numbers are: 1-800-232-2114, (304) 285-6306, and (304) 285-5796 (fax). Mr. Hewitt also left forms that workers can fill out. The forms will be available at the EPA Information Center.

CAG Member Question - Has NIOSH issued alerts or controls for working with vermiculite insulation?

Answer - NIOSH has not yet done so. The level of protection needed will be a function of exposure. The purpose of NIOSH's work at Libby will be to gather the data necessary to issue the alerts and controls. EPA has issued a nationwide alert recommending that until sufficient data have been collected and studied to assess the risk of doing so, that people not disturb vermiculite insulation. Anyone with a question about working with vermiculite insulation should call the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).

CAG Member Question - Will the NIOSH evaluation be based on exposure to asbestos generally or to tremolite asbestos specifically?

Answer - Asbestos in general.

CAG Member Question - OSHA has standards for people working with asbestos. How did they assess the hazard and set a regulation?

Answer - OSHA standards are based on epidemiologic studies that point to exposure risk. The current standard was based on epidemiologic studies of chrysotile not tremolite asbestos. The data being gathered at Libby may indicate that the present OSHA standard is not sufficiently protective. That is why EPA is initiating a review of the asbestos standard. No change can be made to the standard without a rigorous process involving data collection, analysis, and scientific peer review.

Possible Superfund Designation

Mr. Peronard stated that the investigation at the school tracks which is expanding to ball fields has caused him to consider proposing that Libby be added to the National Superfund Site list. Such a designation would provide for long-term funding and consideration of lower priority issues not possible under the current emergency cleanup action.

CAG Member Question - Under Superfund, who is responsible for cleanup?

Answer - EPA would be responsible.

CAG Member Question - Who would be responsible for paying for the cleanup?

Answer - W.R. Grace would continue to be responsible for paying for cleanup.

ATSDR Report

Dan Strausbaugh, Montana Representative of ATSDR, reported three topics:

Medical Screening Results Letters

Mailing of the seventh batch of medical screening results letters (1,400 letters) to screening participants was completed last week, bringing the total mailed to about 4,100 letters. The next mailing (batch #8) will occur from March 16-19th and will consist of another 1,400 letters. The final mailing (batch #9) will occur April 6 and will consist of the last 500 letters. Mr. Strausbaugh stated that everyone should have received their letter by the middle of April.

Another Round of Medical Screening

ATSDR has been compiling a contact list of people for another round of medical screening. About 2,000 people are now on the list, including:

- People who called the 1-800 number, but did not make an appointment during the last round of screening;
- People who made an appointment during the last round of screening, but did not make it to the clinic; and
- People who called the 1-800 number after the medical screening ended.

CAG Member Comment - ATSDR should publicize the toll free number for the screening list nationwide because many people have left the Libby area.

Response - We are working in Denver to identify former W.R. Grace workers who have left Libby.

CAG Member Comment - Workers on the construction of Libby Dam have apparently been diagnosed with asbestos-related disease. These workers should also be notified about medical screening.

CAG Member Question - Is there a time frame for another round of medical screening?

Answer - No. ATSDR is presently concentrating on finishing the final report on the medical screening conducted to date and on identifying former W.R. Grace workers who have left Libby.

CAG Member Comment - An attempt should be made to identify former students who may have used the running tracks at the high school and middle school that were surfaced with vermiculite contaminated with asbestos before they were paved. Class reunion lists could be used to contact people.

Lincoln County Report

Commissioner Rita Windom reported that last night after taking public comment at a hearing, the Lincoln County Commission formally adopted the ordinance initiating an investigation by the County of the impacts of the tremolite asbestos exposure on County public health, welfare, safety, or the environment and of the need for action to abate it. She stated that the County will soon begin acting to implement the ordinance.

Community Health Center Proposal Update

Laura Sedler, a Social Worker with St. John's Lutheran Hospital, reported on the Community Health Center grant application. The County and the Hospital have convened a steering committee to prepare the grant which is due May 15, 2001. The Steering Committee meets weekly on Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. in room 201 of the Lincoln County campus. The goal of the grant application is to receive funding to establish a community health center that would provide universal access to primary health care. Patients at the center with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, which includes 53% of the people of Lincoln County, would be charged a reduced rate set by sliding scale depending on their income. Ms. Sedler stated that the Center would augment rather than replace the medical treatment currently available in Libby. She also said that Center care would not be specific to asbestos-related disease, but a long-range goal would be to fold the CARD Clinic into it. Ms. Sedler emphasized that to be successful the grant must reflect a coalition of community interests. She asked that anyone interested in contributing their time and talent into preparing the grant, please join the steering committee efforts. The grant subdivisions include: mission and strategy, clinical services, governance, and management and finance.

Ms. Sedler also reminded the CAG about the two support groups for people impacted by asbestos. One group meets the 1st and 3rd Mondays at 2:00 p.m. and the other on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Both group meetings are held at 415 Louisiana Ave.

CAG Member Question -Has a location for the Center been chosen yet?

Answer - A location has not yet been chosen.

Wilkins Letter Proposal

Don Wilkins read the letter he drafted to Steven A. Herman, Assistant Administrator Enforcement & Compliance Assurance, EPA, which is included below as Appendix 2. He asked the CAG to agree to send it.

The CAG agreed without opposition to send the letter. A signature page was passed to CAG members and audience members for signatures.

Wagner Letter Proposal

Sandy Wagner reported that the CAG has received a response to its letter to Governor Martz asking that she visit Libby and that she research any funding avenues available to Libby homeowners to defray the costs of contamination removal. Ms. Wagner stated that the response was a form letter signed by Mollee Gemar, Governor Martz' scheduler. She stated that because Governor Martz either may not have seen the CAG's letter or may have misunderstood the seriousness of the CAG's request it contained, that she had drafted a second letter. Ms. Wagner read the letter which is included below as Appendix 3. She asked the CAG to agree to send it. She also suggested releasing the letter to the press.

The CAG agreed without opposition to send the letter, and to release the letter to the press two days after mailing it so that the Governor would receive before any press story would be written. A signature page was passed to CAG members and audience members for signatures.

Thom Letter Proposal

Leroy Thom read a letter he drafted in support of research on asbestos-related diseases being conducted by the Center for Environmental Health Sciences in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences of the University of Montana. The letter is included below as Appendix 4. He explained that this letter would assist Dr. Holian and Dr. Putman in applying for grants. He asked the CAG to agree to send it.

The CAG agreed without opposition to send the letter, and authorized Mr. Thom to sign it on the CAG's behalf.

Public Comment

CAG Member Comment - We have heard tonight that there are 2000 names on ATSDR's list who are seeking medical screening. Someone from the community whose father was a former W.R. Grace worker who died came to me because W.R. Grace had not provided the assistance this person had requested to get tested. People who did not participate in the first round of medical screening need testing to see if they are sick.

Response - A letter to this effect should be written to Dr. Falk.

Comment by Steve Johnson - Twenty-two young people will be visiting the community and offering to do "random acts of kindness." People from the community wishing assistance can sign up to receive it from them.

CAG Member Question - Some months ago we heard a presentation about an internal EPA review by the Inspector General. When will the report of this investigation be released?

Answer - The report should be out by the first week of April. Copies will be provided to the CAG.

CAG Member Comment - We don't have a bucket in which we could accept funds for the medical trust. We need to establish one.

Answer - The community health center would be a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and could function as the "bucket" to accept funding to pay for medical programs.

KLCB Radio Interview

Clinton Maynard played a recording of an interview in which Alan Stringer criticized ATSDR for releasing the interim report on the medical screening results and for the conclusions it contained.

CAG Member Comment - Mr. Stringer questioned ATSDR for releasing the report. They did so because both the County and the CAG asked them to do so.

CAG Member Comment - I asked for radio time to respond to Mr. Stringer's criticism, but was told that ATSDR had already been given time to present the report's results.

CAG Member Comment - The owners of the radio station include Al Uithof of Libby, Joe Fennessy of Libby, Earl Lovick (deceased) of Libby, Frank Whetstone (deceased), and Dave

Robinson. Mr. Lovick was a W.R. Grace executive and Mr. Robinson was a former manager of the W.R. Grace mine.

Correspondence Between Dr. Irons and W.R. Grace

Clinton Maynard passed out copies of 1979 correspondence between Dr. Richard Irons of the Kootenai Clinic and Harry Eschenbach of W.R. Grace. Mr. Maynard stated that the correspondence demonstrate that W.R. Grace stifled efforts to get Libby's asbestos problem addressed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 22, 2001 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room of the Libby City Hall. The agenda will include, as well as the normal agency reports, a discussion of the draft Health Benefit Plan for Libby Asbestos Exposure and ideas for funding it, and a report from the TOSC subcommittee.

Appendix 1

CAG Member Attendance List

March 8, 2001

Members	Group/Organization Represented
Don Wilkins	Lumber & Sawmill Workers
K.W. Maki	Libby School District #4
Clinton Maynard	Area Asbestos Research Group
Rita Windom	Lincoln County Commissioner
Sandy Wagner	Libby Resident
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim
Cyrus Lee	Kootenai Valley Head Start
Bob Dedrick	Asbestos Victim
Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer/CARD Clinic
George Bauer	City of Libby
David F. Latham	The Montanian
Paul Peronard	EPA On-Scene Coordinator
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
Chris Weis	EPA Science Coordinator
Dan C. Strausbaugh	ATSDR/Montana Office
Leroy Thom	Former Grace Employee
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Robert H. Foote	Libby Ministerial Association
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victim

Appendix 2

March 8, 2001

Mr. Steven A. Herman
Assistant Administrator
Enforcement & Compliance Assurance
Environmental Protection Agency
Room 3204-Arial Rios Federal Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Assistant Administrator Herman:

We feel compelled to write this letter to you to express our sincere disappointment that WR Grace is trying to portray the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the villain in the cleanup of Libby, Montana.

We have read the WR Grace letter to you from William Corcoran dated January 18, 2001. In Mr. Corcoran's letter, he seems to be confused of who is really to blame for the tragedy that has rained down on this sleepy little town in Northwest Montana.

Mr. Corcoran tries to imply that WR Grace has been bending over backwards to resolve the outstanding environmental disaster in our community. That assertion is absolutely false. WR Grace has been the main entity that has prolonged not only the ongoing cleanup but also the pain and suffering many in Libby are having to go through.

Mr. Corcoran asserts that " prior to the news stories that broke in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, we (Grace) had no reason to believe that there was a continuing environmental problem in the community." All one would have to do is look at all the personal injury law suits filed against Grace in the past five years, and one would come to the conclusion that they were fully aware there were continuing problems.

The truth of the matter is Grace slithered out of town about ten years ago hoping the truth would never surface. Grace even held budget meetings in the 1980's to determine how much money would be needed to be set aside for this very environmental disaster they "had no reason to believe existed."

Mr. Corcoran indicated Grace put into place a medical package to assist those who become ill. They may very well have such a plan in place, but they were dragged kicking and fighting all the way to even get the benefit level to where it is now. Several of the medical professional service organizations in Libby still are insisting the Plan falls far short of where it needs to be to fully meet the needs of those who are going to die from this terrible disease.

We believe the crux of Mr. Corcoran's letter was to somehow paint the EPA coordinator and his staff as a menace to Libby and to any cooperative effort to resolve outstanding issues in Libby. The truth is quite to the contrary. The EPA coordinator and his staff have been very professional and open to Libby residents. Our frustrations come not from the work performed by EPA, but the feet dragging done by WR Grace. True, Libby residents, are not happy about long it has taken to accomplish the work thus far. Many have lived with this tragedy for a decade or

more and would like for things to move along more quickly.

Libby residents need answers. Those answers are certainly not going to come from WR Grace. They have proven themselves to be an untrustworthy source of information. They hid the dangers of the exposure of tremolite asbestos from their employees and the community. WR Grace built an alliance with the State of Montana years ago to allow an exposure study only if the results weren't released. Well, they are released now, with hundreds in Libby diagnosed with some degree of asbestos exposure disease.

We as a community and a Community Advisory Group would resist any attempt by WR Grace to apply pressures to you to remove the Libby EPA site coordinator and his staff. We have spent the last 14 months or so getting comfortable with the current EPA staff. Any attempt by WR Grace to somehow paint a different picture of the help the EPA has provided thus far should really give you a pretty good idea that they have ulterior motives for Mr. Corcoran's ramblings.

The best way for you to get the real picture of Libby, Montana is come out and experience the community for yourself. One of the Community Advisory Group members will even pick you up at the airport. Don't rely on the very entity that has caused all this damage. They were not honest with their employees or the community. They won't be honest with you.

Thank you

Signed by CAG and Audience Members

Appendix 3

March 12, 2001

Governor Judy Martz
State Capitol
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, Montana 59620-0801

Re: The Nation's #1 Environmental Clean-up Site

Dear Governor Martz:

Thank you for the form letter that we received today from your scheduler, Mollee Gemar. We can certainly appreciate the volume of requests received by your office and your intention to process these requests in a timely manner.

However, events of the past couple of weeks which directly impact the asbestos issue in Libby, Montana make it necessary for us to advise you that this matter requires your immediate, personal attention. Unfortunately, to date the DEQ's participation has been infrequent and superficial. This past week we were advised that due to budget restraints, the DEQ will reduce staff. This makes it quite obvious to us that you have no intention of dedicating the necessary manpower to the clean-up of the Nation's #1 environmental clean-up site which is located in YOUR backyard.

Furthermore, recent press releases would lead one to believe that you are listening to only one side of this tragic issue - a legislator that does not attend our Community Advisory Group meetings, NEVER attended a medical trust subcommittee meeting to review W.R. Grace's Libby Medical Plan in depth nor review the proposed plan that addresses the extremely costly medical needs of an individual afflicted with asbestos related disease. The statement that Grace has made "several" changes to their unfunded, unregulated, uncertain program to enhance the care for persons that they intentionally wronged is not accurate.

We are not certain what kind of a wake-up call the State of Montana needs before it recognizes that this crisis is real just like an earthquake, forest fire, or flood and that this atrocity demands your long term commitment to its resolution.

On April 11, 2001 Senator Max Baucus and a contingent from Washington D.C. will again visit Libby. You may want to consider this an opportunity for you and other Montana officials to come to Libby and view the immense task that our local officials will have to deal with on a "daily" basis for the next 40-50 years.

It is our sincere hope that this request will find its way to the top of your priority list.

Sincerely,

Appendix 4

Libby Community Advisory Group
Libby, Montana 59923

March 8, 2001

Elizabeth A. Putnam, Ph.D.
The University of Montana-Missoula
Center for Environmental Health Sciences
Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences
Skaggs Building, Room 152
Missoula, MT 59812-1552

Dear Dr. Putnam:

Thank you for your presentation and participation at the Community Advisory Group meeting. Your presentation while at the meeting, February 8, 2001 provided hope and insight for our community.

We support you in your efforts in the field of research in regards to the asbestos related diseases which have occurred within our community and pledge our full cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Members
of the
Community Advisory Group of Libby, Montana.